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ABSTRACT

This final report constitutes the culmination of findings and recommendations of a series of working papers on a project which conducted a cooperative study of existing student study team (SST) processes in nine California special education local plan areas. The project is thought to be the first in the nation to describe the characteristics of students referred to SSTs, the modifications/interventions undertaken on their behalf, and the effects of the modifications/interventions on the students. Among findings on SST processes is the expressed need for better ways to provide student followup. Findings on the analysis of 194 student referrals indicated that the most often reported problem categories were in the areas of general academic performance, social/emotional adjustment, academic behavior, and reading. Recommendations made to policy makers, trainers, school staff, parents, and students included: the need for federal, state, and local policy-makers to permit local schools to decide for themselves about establishing and operating SST processes at their schools; the need for trainers to heed school staff reports on their need for assistance in following up on recommendations for interventions and modifications; the need for parents to accept the school's invitation to participate in an SST; and the need for students to bring themselves to the attention of SSTs if needed. (DB)

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Existing Student Study Team Processes in Selected Volunteer Special Education Local Plan Areas, School Districts, and Schools in California: A Descriptive Evaluation Study

Final Report of a State Educational Agency/Federal Evaluation Study conducted by the Program Evaluation and Research Division, California State Department of Education under Cooperative Agreement #G0084C3505 with the United States Department of Education, 1984-1986.

Nothing in this document is to be construed as representing official policy or position of the California State Department of Education or the United States Department of Education.

EC190981

Sacramento, California
June 1986

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In close collaboration with an advisory committee and staff from local educational agencies, the California State Department of Education conducted a descriptive evaluation study on existing student study team processes under a cooperative agreement with the United States Department of Education, as authorized by Public Law 98-199, the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments of 1983. The final report of this project contains the findings and recommendations of that study, which is the first in the nation to describe the characteristics of students brought to the attention of student study teams, the modifications/ interventions undertaken on their behalf, and the effects of those modifications/ interventions on the students. The recommendations are based in part on the findings of local evaluation studies on the topic of student study team processes conducted by a number of Special Education Local Plan Areas in California. Nothing in the final report or this executive summary should be construed as representing official policy or position of the California State Department of Education or the United States Department of Education.

Method. A cooperative case study approach was used by staff in 31 volunteer elementary, intermediate, and high schools in 22 school districts within nine Special Education Local Plan Areas throughout California. Each school was already operating some form of student study team process. The advisory committee and school staff participated in workshops to refine the evaluation questions, develop the data collection instruments, and discuss the preliminary findings. In the fall semester of the 1985-86 school year, school staff

surveyed selected persons at their schools and kept project records on selected students. Project staff analyzed surveys from 230 school staff and project records of 194 students and then drafted interim reports. Key study participants reviewed a draft of this report. A copy of the final report and a set of staff-produced working papers have been submitted to ERIC, the Education Resources Information Center.

Findings on Student Study Team Processes. Diversity describes the existing student study team processes in the 31 participating schools. However, three universal operations are present at all the schools. First, someone notices a student and has a concern; wants help or advice (or thinks the student needs help or advice); and brings the student's case to the attention of the student study team process at the school. Next, two or more persons meet to discuss the student's case and make decisions. Third, one or more participants in the meeting follow up the decisions made at the meeting. The process is cyclical, not a "one-shot and we're done with this case" process.

The persons who meet to discuss a student's case typically are regular education teachers, special education teachers, and specialists from the school district or Special Education Local Plan Area. Parents are often invited to participate in discussions involving their child.

School staff consider their student study team processes to have multiple, student-oriented purposes and generally think their schools effective in accomplishing those purposes. School staff also see room for improvement, particularly in ways and means for following up the effects of the

modifications/ interventions undertaken for students. School staff generally are not satisfied with the philosophy of "No news is good news."

School staff generally reported seven elements as helpful in enhancing team effectiveness:

individual acceptance of responsibility for and completion of tasks outside team meetings;

written reminders to team members of upcoming team meetings;

records of team decisions and task assignments;

informal communication between regular and special education staff outside team meetings;

meeting attendance by all staff involved in student's modifications/ interventions;

regular education teachers accepting responsibility for referring student cases to the team; and

the team "sharing" in the success of modifications/ interventions.

It is evident that a collegial working relationship among school staff at a school site and the sharing of responsibilities and successes are the underlying themes of these elements.

School staff expressed the need for clarification in two areas: (1) the relationships between regular and special education programs, staff, and funding; and (2) the distinctions between student study team processes and the individualized educational program (IEP) team process for determining a student's need for and eligibility for special education programs and services.

The findings on the student study team processes are similar to the findings of local evaluation studies on the topic of student study team processes conducted by a number of Special Education Local Plan Areas during the past several years.

Findings on Students. An extensive examination of the project records kept on the 194 students brought to the attention of student study teams in the participating schools revealed no patterns. Each student in the study was different, with a different constellation of "problem characteristics." Further, there was no pattern of "problem characteristics" and modifications/ interventions recommended by the student study teams. Finally, there was no pattern of student characteristics, modifications/ interventions, and relative success or failure of modifications undertaken.

Collectively, the 194 students were in all grade levels from kindergarten through the twelfth grade and spoke nine languages. Boys outnumbered girls (139 to 55.) One hundred and one students (52%) were enrolled only in the regular education program. Another 78 students were enrolled in the regular education program and at least one other categorical or district program (including special education). A few students (10) were enrolled only in special education. The five other students had special circumstances such as returning from a detoxification center or being a new arrival in the district.

Of the 15 categories of student "problem" characteristics, four were reported most often: General Academic Performance, Social/ Emotional Adjustment, Academic Behavior, and Reading. General Academic Performance (which

includes retention of previously learned material, test results, and performance in comparison to grade level) was the most frequently occurring student "problem" characteristic. The four characteristics occurred either alone on in some combination with the other eleven characteristics in over 40% of the student records.

The most frequently recommended type of modification/ intervention was referral for intervention by a person outside the regular (or special) classroom. For example, persons with specialized knowledge and experience, such as resource specialists, speech teachers, and school psychologists, were often requested to observe the youngster. Persons located off the school campus or in the community were other examples of outside resources.

School staff, particularly teachers, were responsible for acting on a great many modifications/ interventions. Over 1,000 active modifications/ interventions were acted on for the 194 students. Parents also participated in implementing modifications/ interventions for their own children. Examples were 'contracts' with the student study teams for extending to the home the school's modifications for improved behavior and taking their child to community-based persons or agencies for counseling or medical care.

Generally speaking, the modifications/ interventions undertaken for the students were judged as having some degree of success in positively affecting the "problem characteristics" for which the students were brought to the attention of the team process. Due to the relatively short time period for data collection, particularly for the students brought into the team process late in the semester, there was a correspondingly brief time for implementing

the team's recommendations, and even less time to observe and record the results of implementation. Similarly, there was a short time period for completing the referral process to outside specialists and community agencies, when such a recommendation had been made. Some of the modifications/ interventions were therefore recorded as being "in progress" or "too early to tell." The relatively few modifications/ interventions judged as failing were discontinued, and others implemented.

Recommendations. A number of recommendations are made to policy- makers, trainers, school staff, parents, and students. The recommendations are based on the findings of this study, the findings of previous local evaluation studies on student study team processes, and on the experiences of over a hundred participants in this study.

Federal, State, and local policy-makers should:

* recognize that student study team processes are school site-operated resources for ideas on resolving the "problem" characteristics of individual students. Student study teams are also a clearinghouse for information about services which individual students may need to succeed in school.

* think of student study team processes as complementing both regular education and categorical education programs, not as a substitute for either.

* recognize that student study team processes are not a way of saving money on special education programs.

* permit local schools to decide for themselves about establishing and operating student study team processes at their schools, rather than mandating a process. The active participation of persons from the whole school is fundamental to the success of the student study team process and the goal of helping students.

* limit their role in the student study team process to encouragement and support. Mandation would undermine the essential collegial problem-solving process of people at a school.

* clarify the relationships between regular education and categorical education programs, staff, and funding, in the student study team processes.

* clarify the distinctions between student study team processes and the individualized educational program (IEP) team process.

* revise compliance and auditing practices, consistent with law, to encourage rather than discourage the voluntary operation of student study team processes by schools.

* study the relationships between guidance and counseling services and student study team processes, particularly in view of recent changes in graduation requirements.

Trainers in student study team inservice process training programs should:

* heed school staff reports that their greatest needs were for assistance in following up on their recommendations for interventions/ modifications and in assessing the effects of their efforts for their student (positive changes in "problem" characteristics).

* conduct and/or take advantage of field research on how school staff, parents, and students determine the effects of modifications/ interventions suggested by school student study teams. Given school staffs' expressed needs, this type of research should be given a high priority.

* base training programs on the results of such field research.

* adapt training for school staff to the staff and students at each school.

* demonstrate the positive effects of their training programs on students in elementary, intermediate, and high schools before offering a training program to school staff.

Staff in schools, districts, and Special Education Local Plan Areas should:

* tailor their student study team processes to fit school staff and students. Intermediate and high schools should take into account their departmental structure and organization.

* make inservice training on student study team processes useful to teachers, particularly regular education teachers.

* analyze the characteristics of students brought to the attention of their teams.

* measure the effect of modifications/ interventions in resolving the "problem" characteristics of the students brought to the attention of the student study team process.

* invite parents to participate in student study team discussions when the person who brought their youngster to the attention of the team process thinks the student needs help or advice.

* inform their parent organizations and student councils about the purposes, operation, and effects of their student study team processes.

Parents should:

* accept a school's invitation to participate in a student study team meeting to discuss their child.

* be prepared to discuss the modifications/ interventions which have worked (or not worked) in the past for their child and provide ideas on what motivates their child to succeed.

Students, particularly at the upper elementary, intermediate, and high school grade levels, should:

* consider any avenue for seeking and receiving help early on as a mark of maturity and self-determination.

* bring themselves to the attention of the student study team process at their schools.

Finally, all schools, not just those schools with student study team processes, should:

* examine the effects of their assistance to teachers, parents, and students themselves in enhancing the success of all students.

* use the results of their examination to keep their school programs tailored to their current needs and enhance the academic, career, personal, and social growth of all their students.

"What we treasure, we measure."

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PROJECT STAFF FOREWARD

The positive value of this study is already being felt among the participating Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) and their constituent school districts and participating schools. For many, participation in the study was the first opportunity to examine their team processes, organization, and effectiveness. The tabulations returned to the school participants via their respective SELPAs and the preliminary findings of the study are being used even now as springboards for some schools to further examine, critique, and improve on their student study team's effectiveness.

Although the project staff derives great pleasure from knowing the data analysis efforts are so immediately useful, data of such complexity and depth would not have been attainable without the cooperation and good will of the participants. The greatest compliment is due these professionals whose voluntary enthusiasm and concern is reflected in such ongoing local efforts to improve educational programs for the benefit of their students.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to describe the background, purpose, and philosophy of the descriptive evaluation study on existing student study team processes conducted by the California State Department of Education under a cooperative agreement with the Office of Special Education Programs of the United States Department of Education, under the State Educational Agency/Federal Evaluation Studies Program. The original eighteen-month study period was from October 1, 1984, through March 31, 1986. In February 1986, the duration was extended to June 30, 1986.

Background

Over the past several years, there has been continuing local, state, and national interest in the concept of student study teams as a means of assisting teachers in regular education schools with their efforts to help their students to succeed in their education programs.

In California the concept of student study teams was not new. There were many names for such team processes across California, such as teacher assistance teams, student success committees, school site solution committees, problem-solving groups, and case study committees (California State Department of Education, 1984.) However, the evaluation of student study team processes and results was in the beginning stages. For example, during 1983-84 eleven Special Education Local Plan Areas had selected some aspect of student study

teams to examine in their local evaluation studies (California State Department of Education, 1985.) The following paragraph provides a brief description of California public schools.

In the fall of 1984, regular education programs were provided and administered by 1,029 individual school districts, which operated over 7,000 schools. District enrollment ranged from less than twenty students to over 500,000. The statewide enrollment of students in kindergarten through grade twelve was over 4,000,000. Special education programs were provided and administered by individual school districts or by consortia of districts, with or without one of the 58 county offices of superintendents of schools. Whatever the configuration, the local educational agency or agencies was known as a Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA). About 400,000 students were enrolled in special education programs in 105 SELPAs.

The local evaluation studies had revealed a high degree of diversity in the structure and functions of student study teams. This diversity existed in the name of the process, team membership, relationship to special education, types of students assisted, formality of the processes, and the frequency of meetings. The studies also indicated that the operations of student study teams were not systematic or uniform across all schools within a SELPA; rather the operations were tailored to meet the students' needs and the organization of each specific school site. In the schools which had a formalized process, the responsibilities, roles, and a sequence of activities were defined in a written plan.

These studies had also identified some issues and concerns regarding student study teams. The student study team processes at some schools were perceived by some school staff to be lacking a clear definition of purpose, lacking a clear definition of responsibility between regular and special education for team functions, time consuming, taking too long between student study team's recommendations and the implementation of those recommendations in the regular education program, and lacking provisions for follow-up.

The results of these local evaluation studies had demonstrated system effects of such team processes in schools, such as a decrease in the number of formal referrals for assessment for possible special education placement and an increase in the proportion of students determined to be eligible for special education services (California State Department of Education, 1984.)

The effects of modifications and interventions suggested by such teams on individual students was largely unknown. There were indications that about one-third of the regular education students brought to the attention of the teams were not helped, were referred for assessment for possible special education placement and services and were subsequently determined by their Individualized Educational Program (IEP) teams as ineligible for special education services, and remained in their classrooms.

Further, there was scant information about the characteristics of the students and the modifications or interventions which were suggested and attempted. Periodic reviews of the literature have been unsuccessful in locating any studies providing data on the student effects.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine the purposes, composition, operation, and outcomes of existing student study team processes in regular education schools. The study was descriptive, not experimental. The study was aimed at producing information which would be useful to practitioners in schools and to policy-makers at local, state, and federal levels.

Philosophy of the Study

There were three philosophical principles which helped guide the study: collegiality, utility of information, and division of labor among the study participants and the Project Advisory Committee. The Department assigned the responsibility for conducting the study to the Program Evaluation and Research Division. With the active involvement of a Project Advisory Committee, the Division conducted the study as a cooperative project with representatives of nine Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) and 31 schools in 22 school districts throughout California. All had volunteered for possible selection to participate. Selection was made at random from among the volunteers. In addition, persons from other schools provided background information during the development of the working papers and data collection instruments. Reviewers of the draft final report have also contributed to the clarity and utility of the information. The names and locations of these key participants are provided in the Acknowledgements section of this report.

Among the most important aspects of an evaluation study are the questions to be addressed and the audience which will receive the evaluation information to respond to those questions. The usefulness of the information is directly related to the involvement of the prospective audience in the development of the evaluation questions.

Originally, there were three evaluation questions. The federal partner in the cooperative agreement which partially funded the project activities, the Office of Special Education Programs of the United States Department of Education, added a question. The Project Advisory Committee added other questions. The SELPA and school representatives to the project added more. The final list contained eighteen (!) evaluation questions which were to be addressed in the project (listed below). During the course of the study most of the questions relevant to student study teams and their processes would be addressed. Some of the student questions, especially those specifically aimed at the unique problems of special education students, were beyond the scope of this study primarily due to limitations in time and resources for collecting data on individual students brought to the attention of the student study teams in the participating schools.

Final List of Evaluation Questions

1. What is the purpose of Student Study Teams?

2. What are the necessary elements of a Student Study Team and why?

3. What are the optional elements of a Student Study Team and why?

4. What is the process of a Student Study Team at a school site?

5. Does the process accomplish the purposes of the Student Study Team?
   a. If yes, why?
   b. If no, why?

6. What resources were available for suggestions/ modifications/ interventions for a student?

7. What processes do Student Study Teams use for matching the modifications of the regular class program to student dysfunctions and abilities?

8. Which modifications were used in the regular classroom program (academic, behavior, group, individual)?

9. What procedures or criteria do teams use to measure, judge, or determine whether a modification of the regular classroom program is "successful" for a particular student?

10. What are the variables which lead to effective Student Study Teams at elementary level schools?

11. What are the variables which lead to effective Student Study Teams at intermediate level schools?

12. What are the variables which lead to effective Student Study Teams at secondary level schools?

13. What are the characteristics of regular education students who are referred to Student Study Teams, and how many times do these characteristics occur?

14. Are there patterns of characteristics such as at grade levels or subject areas?

15. How do teams determine whether a student is "successful" in a regular classroom program after suggested modifications have been made?

16. Which student characteristics are associated with the success of particular modifications?

17. Which student characteristics are associated with lack of success of particular modifications and later determination of:
    A. eligibility for and in need of special education services:
        1. Which handicapping conditions?
        2. Which special education services prescribed?
    B. ineligibility for special education services:
        1. Which kinds of services are now being received?
        2. What benefits are being gained?

18. With what frequency are particular student characteristics associated with immediate student study team referral for special education assessment and later determination of:
    A. qualified (eligible) ... and how many students?
    B. not qualified (ineligible) ... and how many students?

Content of the Report

The next chapter will present the methods used to develop and conduct the study. The findings presented in Chapter III are followed by recommendations in Chapter IV, a list of selected references, and a list of project staff-produced working papers.

The working papers, including the data collection instruments, will be deposited with the final report in ERIC, the Education Resources Information Center. Further description of the conduct of the study is available in the quarterly performance reports submitted by the project to the Office of Special Education Programs.

CHAPTER II. METHODS

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief summary of the methods used in the cooperative, descriptive study of existing student study team processes.

A case study approach was used to describe the existing student study team processes at participating schools. The development of the data collection plan was a collaborative effort among the project staff, the project advisory committee, and the local representatives. The aim of the plan was to gather data to respond to the evaluation questions. The data were collected by school staff, collated by Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) staff, and analyzed by project staff. The preliminary findings were prepared by project staff and reviewed by local staff and the project advisory committee. This chapter describes the sequence of the study activities.

Formation of the Advisory Committee. The Project Advisory Committee was formed to guide the refinement of the study procedures. The committee worked on the evaluation questions to be addressed; the method of selection of the participating Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) and schools; the content and format of project workshops held for SELPA and school representatives, and development of the data collection instruments. The eight members included educators at school, district, SELPA, and state levels. All members of the committee had regular education teaching experience in addition to possessing expertise and experience in special education programs for students with handicapping conditions.

Selection of Study Participants. There were three successive levels of selection: project, Special Education Local Plan Area (and school district) and school. First, the project director invited all 105 Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) in California to volunteer for possible selection and selected nine at random from among the volunteers. Eight of the nine were multiple-district SELPAs; one was a single district. The SELPAs were located throughout California in urban and rural communities.

Second, each SELPA designated a representative to the study, and together with its school districts, designated three regular education schools as volunteers for participation in the study. Wherever possible, one school was to be at the elementary grade level, one at the intermediate or junior high grade level, and one at the senior high grade level. (The configuration of grade levels at particular schools in California is a local option.) Each school already had established some form of student study team processes. Twenty-nine schools were designated as participants in the Spring of 1985. There were 14 elementary schools, seven intermediate schools, and eight high schools, from 22 different school districts. The student enrollment in the participating schools ranged from 111 to 3,297. Enrollment in the elementary schools ranged from 111 to 723. In the intermediate (or junior high) schools, the range of enrollment was 173 to 1,200. The high school enrollment ranged from 302 to 3,297.

Third, each designated school selected a staff person to act as the representative to the study. Each school designated the persons to perform the data collection (most often the school representative to the study.) Each

school also selected the staff persons to respond to the survey and the students on whom data would be reported to the study. The aim of the student selection was to obtain a wide variety of student characteristics and modifications/ interventions suggested by the student study teams. There was no intent to select 'representative' students.

School Participation in the Study. During the study period six schools were added to the study and four schools withdrew, primarily due to changes in the responsibilities of key personnel or because of inactivity of the student study team process at those schools. (Other schools from the same SELPA were incorporated into the study.) Other schools volunteered to participate in the study by completing the data collection forms. In addition, during the development of the data collection instruments, project staff interviewed school staff in several schools which did not otherwise participate in the study. In all, over 40 schools contributed materials, information, and data to the project. Thirty-one schools participated in the data collection phase itself.

Definitions of Terms Used in the Study. As noted in the Introduction, previous local evaluation studies conducted by Special Education Local Plan Areas (SELPAs) had determined that there was no single operational definition of the student study team process. Therefore no 'a priori' definitions of terms were adopted. For purposes of this study, the term 'student study team process' was used to refer to all the various names used in the participating schools for their existing processes for group assistance to teachers and parents in helping their students and children to succeed in school. Similarly, the terms

used in the data collection instruments were taken from a content analysis of documents in use at the schools and in the SELPAs. Consistent with the study's aims of being descriptive, rather than prescriptive or experimental, no terms were created specifically for the study, or adopted from the theoretical literature.

Development of the Evaluation Questions. In its first meeting, held in January 1985, the project advisory committee expanded the evaluation questions. The SELPA and school representatives revised and expanded the questions in a workshop held in March 1985. The expansion was consistent with the project principle of utility of information. The school representatives wanted to know the answers to the questions they had about the process and its effects on students. Eighteen evaluation questions were ultimately settled on (See p. 6).

Data Collection Instruments. The evaluation questions drove the development of the instruments. Because there were no instruments available, project staff designed four draft data collection instruments to gather data to respond to the evaluation questions. The draft instruments were based on a content analysis of documents and forms already in use in the participating schools, complemented by interviews with school staff who were experienced in student study team activities in districts (and schools) which did not participate in the study's data collection activities. SELPA representatives, school representatives, and the project advisory committee critiqued the forms and procedures at a workshop held in September 1985. During that workshop the decision was made to drop one of the data collection forms even though dropping it meant that one of the evaluation questions added at the previous

workshop would not be answered. The rationale was to lessen the data collection burden on teachers and other school staff. Project staff revised the forms and procedures and sent the final data collection notebook to the SELPAs for reproduction and distribution to the school representatives*.

The final instruments were (1) a 15-page survey of participants regarding student study team processes, (2) a two-page log of student study team decisions, and (3) a 30-page individual student record form. A partial list of modifications/ interventions was provided for the school staff to refer to when completing the student record form. The seeming length of the student record was due to the large number of student characteristic pages provided. Only applicable pages were to be completed by school staff for each selected student depending on the characteristics for which the student was brought to the attention of the student study team. Because this was the first study to examine the characteristics of students brought to the attention of student study teams, it was necessary to devote a considerable amount of time in developing and refining the student record form. Several of the evaluation questions addressed the relationships between student characteristics and the effects of modifications/ interventions.

The individual student record form was designed to yield data on the age, gender, language(s) spoken, grade level and school program enrollment, characteristics of students brought to the attention of the student study team,

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* The data collection notebook which includes all project data collection instruments, is available as a working paper. See List of Working Papers, p. 53.

modifications/ interventions suggested, providers of modifications/ interventions, and the results of modifications/ interventions (including any referrals made by the student study team.) An example page from the student record form is provided on page 15.

Over 150 specific descriptors of student problem areas had been identified during the content analysis. The descriptors were then classified into 15 student characteristics: reading, math, spelling, writing, speaking, handwriting, general academic performance, academic behavior, social/emotional adjustment, school behavior, motor coordination, preschool development, perceptual dysfunction, general health, and "other". The student record pages provided space for checking whether a particular specific descriptor was a problem before and after a modification was attempted, for noting the type of modification and/or intervention attempted for each specific descriptor, the providers of modifications/ interventions, and the results of the attempt(s), as well as providing space for making comments (See p. 15).

The partial list of modifications had been developed during the content analysis. The list contained over 135 specific modifications and interventions, classified into nine types. Study participants assisted in determining the categories into which particular specific characteristic descriptors would be placed. The nine were environment, materials, assignments, teaching techniques, learning channels, miscellaneous, parent contact, outside resource intervention, and behavior shaping. The 'outside resource intervention' included persons and agencies outside the classroom.

Although the involvement of parents could be considered an "outside resource", study participants felt the nature of parent contact was qualitatively different from the interventions provided by educational professionals and other specialists. Thus, contact with parents and parent involvement with the delivery of modifications/ interventions on the student's behalf was given a unique coding. See Frequently Appearing Specific Descriptors of Modifications and Interventions, p. 23.

An encoding system was provided to permit maintenance of confidentiality for individual student information. No student names were forwarded to the project staff.

FORM 13, Part II, Page G-1. GENERAL ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Student Name:_____

Student I.D.#:_____

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS	In Relation To Modifications: BEFORE	AFTER	COMMENTS
grade point average (GPA) . . .	[ ]	_____	.
credits: behind, completed . .	[ ]	_____	.
performance in comparison to grade	[ ]	_____	.
low achievement in relation to "ability"	[ ]	_____	.
slow learner	[ ]	_____	.
few academic strengths	[ ]	_____	.
"appears to be very bright" . .	[ ]	_____	.
previous intervention/ modification history . . .	[ ]	_____	.
test results	[ ]	_____	.
does not exhibit reasoning . .	[ ]	_____	.
difficulty in learning and using concepts	[ ]	_____	.
(Continued on G-2)			

BEFORE: Check if a characteristic is a problem BEFORE modification.

AFTER: Note "OK" if no longer a problem; "CP" if a continuing problem; and "NP" if the characteristic is a new problem.

MODIFICATIONS/INTERVENTIONS: (please be specific and concrete)

Type(s) of modification:_____

Date(s) of modification:_____

Provider(s) of modification:_____

Team judgment of student success after modification:_____

Criteria used?_____

COMMENTS:_____

_____

Data Collection. There was no attempt to change or interfere with any existing process at any school site. During the 1985-86 Fall Semester each school gathered its data. Each school selected a number of its school staff with some experience in that school's student study team process to complete a survey. Each school kept a log of its student study team meetings and completed an individual student record form on a number of students who had been brought to the attention of the team by their teachers, parents, or any concerned person. The school representative forwarded the completed forms to the SELPA representative. Each SELPA representative forwarded the completed forms for its participating schools to the project staff in Sacramento.

Data Treatment and Analysis. Project staff analyzed a total of 230 surveys, 26 logs, and 194 student record forms. As promised during the September 1985 workshop, project staff tabulated the surveys from each school and SELPA and returned the aggregated data to each school and SELPA for their information and local use. Project staff then aggregated the survey data by school level using a decision rule of 50% or more of respondents as an indicator of agreement on a particular aspect of the student study team process being present at a school site. The logs of student study team meetings were tabulated and aggregated across school levels.

The individual student record forms were coded, tabulated, and aggregated across four grade level ranges: primary, upper elementary, intermediate and secondary. Based on the comments made by the school staff about the implementation and success of modifications/ interventions attempted, a system was

developed for rating each modification/ intervention suggested or attempted with the students. The ratings were divided into three basic groups: 0, modifications not pursued or rejected by parents; 1, ratings relevant to the status of a referral process; and 2, ratings relevant to active modifications/ interventions introduced into the student's learning environment. "Active" modifications/ interventions refer to attempts to actually modify or intervene in the student's learning environment and experience. They are distinguished from preliminary "referral" processes which involve referral (primarily) to outside resources or specialists for observation or evaluation. Once these "referral" processes result in suggestions of techniques or materials which can be enacted, the coding of modification/ intervention changes to ratings relevant to "active" intervention.* Ratings "1" and "2" were further subdivided in order to account for reported differences in their respective processes. These are listed, along with a summary listing of the student characteristics and modification/ intervention categories, on page 20. Lists of frequently appearing specific descriptors associated with "problem" characteristics, modifications and interventions as provided by the study participants also appear at the end of this chapter (pp. 21-23).

Project staff examined the data for any apparent patterns of student characteristics, modifications/ interventions suggested, and results of modifications/ interventions. Summaries and frequencies were calculated from the raw data and cross-referenced to the appropriate evaluation questions.

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* For further information on coding procedures see List of Working Papers, p. 53.

Data Interpretation and Review of the Draft Preliminary Findings. Project staff drafted preliminary responses to the evaluation questions addressed in the project. Feedback was obtained in two workshops* held for the school and SELPA representatives and the members of the Project Advisory Committee in February and March 1986. Project staff synthesized the evaluation information produced by the project into the findings presented in the next chapter. This synthesis was presented to the Program, Research and Evaluation, and Personnel Committee of the Advisory Commission on Special Education in April 1986.

Preparation and Review of the Draft Final Report. The draft final report was sent to the project advisory committee, the SELPAs**, and to members of a field review committee. Following revisions and internal Department reviews, the draft final report was submitted to the federal partner in the cooperative evaluation study for review and approval before dissemination.

Limitations

There were a number of limitations in the design and conduct of the study. First, the study was designed to be descriptive rather than definitive, comparative, experimental, or prescriptive. Second, there was no attempt to produce information which would be generalizable to the universe of over 7,000

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* Workshops were held for both northern and southern California participants in Sacramento and Los Angeles, respectively.

** School representatives and the school staff who had contributed information in the development of the data collection instruments received their information via their SELPAs.

regular elementary and secondary schools in California. Third, there was no attempt to select schools at random. The group of schools selected for participation in the study were all volunteers. Fourth, the time period for actual data collection was limited to less than one school semester, providing a relatively short time for any modifications and interventions undertaken for students to have an observable effect or for the processes of referral for other school or community services (including assessment and identification of student handicapping condition and need for special education) to be completed. Fifth, the scope of the study did not include gathering information on the training and experience needed by participating school staff, the prior history of student study team processes at particular schools, nor the cost in time and resources required to develop and carry on student study team processes.

These limitations should be considered as the context for the findings to be presented in the next chapter of the report.

SUMMARY LISTING OF STUDENT "PROBLEM" CHARACTERISTICS, MODIFICATIONS/ INTERVENTIONS AND MODIFICATION/INTERVENTION RATINGS

Characteristics

(A) Reading
(B) Math
(C) Spelling
(D) Writing
(E) Speaking
(F) Handwriting

(G) General Academic Performance
(H) Academic Behavior

(I) Social/ Emotional Adjustment
(J) School Behavior

(K) Motor Coordination
(L) Preschool Development
(M) Perceptual Dysfunction
(N) General Health

(O) Other Characteristics

Modifications/Interventions

(a) Environment
(b) Materials
(c) Assignments
(d) Teaching Techniques
(e) Learning Channels
(f) Miscellaneous
(g) Parent Contact
(h) Outside Resource Intervention
(i) Behavior Shaping

Modification/Intervention Ratings

0 = Modification Not Pursued/ Rejected By Parent

Referral Process:

1.0 = Status Unknown
1.1 = Awaiting Assessment
1.2 = Modifications Being Developed
1.3 = Referral Complete; No Active Modification Warranted

Active Modification:

2.0 = Unable to Judge "Success" (Too soon to tell/ No comments offered/ "success" not applicable)
2.1 = Modification Terminated - Unsuccessful
2.2 = Modification Proceeding - No Change Indicated; Not Apparently Working
2.3 = " " - Marginal or Limited Success
2.4 = " " - Moderate to Good Results
2.5 = " " - Extremely Successful
2.6 = Modification Terminated - Problem Resolved/ Modification Successful

FREQUENTLY APPEARING SPECIFIC DESCRIPTORS* OF STUDENT "PROBLEM" CHARACTERISTICS

(A) Reading	Decoding; word attack skills/ phonetics; comprehension.
(B) Math	Number reversals; concepts; basic computation.
(C) Spelling	Skill well below reading achievement; cannot spell from list or dictation; omits or adds letters.
(D) Written Language	Writing sentences; grammar; poor written expression.
(E) Spoken Language	Poorly retained auditory input; poor listening skills, poor understanding of commands or directions; unable to express thoughts and feelings.
(F) Handwriting	Reverses letters; difficulty copying from page and blackboard.
(G) General Academic Performance	Forgets previously learned material; few academic strengths; slow learner; knowledge gaps (surprises as to what is known/not known).
(H) Academic Behavior	Wastes class time; does not/cannot follow directions; has difficulty understanding directions, questions, or comments; doesn't bring materials to class.
(I) Social/Emotional Adjustment	Withdrawn; often angry; inadequate self-concept; poor frustration tolerance; doesn't relate well to peers; hyperactive.
(J) School Behavior	Doesn't "own" actions/blames others; completes little work; is passive resister; poor attitude to adult authority.
(K) Motor Coordination	Poor hand-eye coordination, fine motor coordination.
(L) Preschool Development	Primarily relates to developmental delays.

* Specific descriptors have been taken directly from the student record forms; the expressions listed are the expressions of the study participants and do not reflect any imposition of terminology by the project staff.

(M) Perceptual Dysfunction	Reversals; visual decoding; memory problems: visual input/ oral input; retrieval/output: oral, written.
(N) General Health	Low vitality; visual problems; auditory problems.
(O) Other	Changes/problems in home environment; concerns about student reentry after illness or social problems; poor attitude towards school, bored with/hates school.

FREQUENTLY APPEARING SPECIFIC DESCRIPTORS* OF MODIFICATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS

a. Environment	Use small groups; increase one-to-one instruction; use peer or adult tutors; change schedule, class, or grade assignment.
b. Materials	Use specific diagnostic or learning materials; remedial math or reading programs; Chapter I/ School Improvement Program (SIP) and Miller-Unruh services.
c. Assignments	Simplify or shorten; specialized assignments; alternative assignment structures; individualized contracts.
d. Teaching Techniques	Classroom contracts; use behavior modification techniques; repeat directions/instructions same way, more slowly, differently; reinforce correct responses promptly; use praise for learning achievements.
e. Learning Channels	Teach to sensory strength; use kinesthetic/tactile approach; neurological impress system; drill to overlearn.
f. Miscellaneous	Keep work samples; collect information on student.
g. Parent Contact	Parent/Teacher, /Principal, /Counselor conferences; daily, weekly, biweekly phone calls or notes or reports; home/school contracts, esp. for behavior.
h. Outside Resource Intervention	Psychologist for testing; classroom observation by principal, psychologist, learning specialist, nurse; screening by above/ use of in-class diagnostic materials; referrals to learning, vocational, behavior specialists or programs.
i. Behavior Shaping	Systematic monitoring; use of peer tutor, cross-age or teacher aides; individual contracts for behavior; reinforcement of desired social and/or academic behaviors; share information about student with staff, administrators and parents.

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* Specific descriptors have been taken directly from the student record forms; the expressions listed are the expressions of the study participants and do not reflect any imposition of terminology by the project staff.

CHAPTER III. FINDINGS

The findings on existing student study team processes in the participating schools demonstrate variety in the purposes, design, and execution of the processes in the schools; distinguish three universal activities; and provide the first information on the short-term effects of extensive modifications/interventions undertaken for students brought to the attention of student study teams. The first section of this chapter will focus on the student study team process. The second section will present findings on the students.

SECTION 1. FINDINGS ON THE STUDENT STUDY TEAM PROCESS

Purposes of Student Study Team Processes

Schools reported many purposes of student study team processes. Twenty-nine of the 30 participant schools reported coordination of delivery of services, serving regular education students with learning problems, and referring students to other programs if necessary most frequently. Twenty-eight of the 30 schools reported four other purposes nearly as frequently: ensuring the correct academic placement of students, providing a team approach to work on students' problems, acting as a resource in developing interventions, and making recommendations for modifications and interventions. The next most frequently mentioned purposes included developing interventions to enable students to function in the regular education program, providing a quick approach to maximize each student's education, and planning regular education stra-

tegies before deciding on a referral for assessment for possible special education placement (27 of the 30 schools). There were 16 other purposes of student study team processes identified by more than half of the participating schools.

Student Study Team Operations

This subsection is divided into three parts: universal activities, variations on those activities, and effects and effectiveness.

A. Universal Activities. The study revealed three universal activities in the operation of existing student study team processes in the participating schools. The three activities were:

1. Someone notices a student and has a concern; wants help or advice or thinks the student needs help or advice; and brings the student's case to the attention of the student study team process in the school.

2. A group of two or more persons meet to discuss the student's case and to make decision(s).

3. One or more participants in the meeting follow(s) up the decision(s) made in the meeting.

B. Variations on Universal Activities. There were a great many variations in each of the activities of student study team processes in the participating schools, a not unexpected finding. Each universal activity and its respective variations will be described separately.

1. Variations on the first activity, "someone notices a student; wants help or advice or thinks the student needs help or advice; and brings the student's case to the attention of the student study team process in the student's school."

a. The "Noticers". School staff reported that the "noticers" varied in their schools. Noticers included the student's classroom teacher (regular or special), physical education teacher, or anyone involved with the student, including his or her parent(s).

b. Procedures for Bringing a Student to the Team's Attention. Another set of variations surrounded the procedures for bringing the student's case to the attention of the student study team process in the student's school. Some schools had formal, documented procedures. Other schools were less formal. Some schools had "referral" forms to be completed by the "noticer." These forms varied in length from one to eight pages.

When pre-meeting procedures were described, some schools reported that a coordinator was responsible for notifying participants, and for inviting concerned persons, including parents in some cases, or professionals from outside the school, the district, or the educational system. In other schools these pre-meeting duties were carried out by a counselor or school principal. Some schools reported using mail notification, some phone contact, and others did not specify how contact was made, nor if it was systematically pursued.

At some schools, informal contact between team participants may precede a student's case being discussed at a team meeting. This generally included information gathering on the student.

Other information gathering on students' cases may involve a variety of sources, including referral forms, review of a student's cumulative record, and discussions with the student's previous teachers.

Another element that varied was the time available to plan and prepare for student study team meetings. Some schools called "emergency" meetings (for example, when a student's family has had a death, a sudden serious illness, or a major accident.) Some schools met at regular intervals of a week, two weeks, monthly, or "as needed."

c. What Student Study Team Processes are Called. The names by which student study team processes were known at participating schools varied. In addition to student study team, the process was called "child success team," "child study team," "child guidance team," and "inquiry team."

2. Variations on the second activity, "a group of two or more persons meet to discuss the student's case and to make decisions."

a. How Student Study Teams are Organized. The school participants reported a wide variability in the ways they organized their student study teams. Most of the teams have a chairperson run the meeting but that chair may or may not be a permanent assignment. The chair may rotate among the members. In some cases the site administrator chaired the meeting. In a few schools a chairperson was intentionally unassigned or "emerged" as the meeting progressed. Some of the teams had a facilitator assist with keeping the discussion "on track" in addition to having a chair lead the meeting.

The amount and complexity of meeting records maintained varied widely. Some teams keep elaborate records noting specifics of the student case, discussion minutes, decisions arrived at, who is responsible for enacting the team's decision, and setting a date to review the progress of the case. For some teams simple meeting minutes are all that is officially kept. Who is responsible for maintaining these records and whether there is clerical support for the team administration varied from school to school.

In general, the teams organize themselves to meet the unique qualities (for example, lots of informal contact between team members) and limitations (for example, heavy case load) each team's membership and specific school site offered in relation to the school's needs and the available resources.

b. Team Membership and Coordination. Schools reported a wide variety of persons with differing roles and responsibilities from the school, home, and community who met as part of a student study team from time to time. The persons most often reported as being "regular" members were resource teacher, psychologist, speech and language teacher, regular classroom teacher, and principal.

Schools reported their student study teams coordinated with a variety of programs. The service providers that may be involved in a student study team process included the school office (either the principal or vice-principal), the school nurse, counselors, psychologists, Resource Specialist Programs, School Improvement Programs, English-as-a-Second-Language Programs, Gifted and Talented Education, speech and language specialists, Magnet Arts Schools, continuation school programs, Public Health, Mental Health, Welfare and Social Services, and physicians (general practitioners, allergists, opthalmologists).

Over 80% of the schools said they used the referring teacher's reaction to suggestions as part of the process they used to recommend strategies on the student's behalf. Almost three-fourths also said they invited parents to participate in discussions involving their children.

Teams varied in the number of students whose cases were scheduled for discussion at particular team meetings. Team members received information about a student from a variety of sources, including records and persons involved with the student. Parents and classroom teachers provided material to the teams.

c. Types of Decisions. After discussing a student's case, teams made decisions. The types of decisions varied. As reported by school staff, the most typical decisions were:

to give suggestions to those who had noticed the student's "problem";

to give suggestions to others;

to refer students to other persons, programs, and services (including assessment) at the school, in the school district, in the Special Education Local Plan Area, and in the community;

to set a date for reviewing the student's case; and

to wait for more information.

In some schools, the review dates were specified in advance; in other schools, reviews were done "as needed". In some schools (less than one-third) reviews may not occur and thus, "no news was good news."

Other types of decisions reported by participating schools included agreeing on the extent of student success, and closing a student's case.

d. Feedback Procedures on Effects of Team Suggestions. In general the teams take feedback about the effects of their suggestions on the students at either predetermined review dates or during any regularly scheduled meeting. For nearly all the participant schools that feedback is given by the person(s) who acted on the team's recommendations. The teams then tended to discuss all the feedback relating to a student's case and evaluate as a group the success of their recommendations. Often, a group consensus is arrived at regarding determinations of intervention "success". The team would then decide on the next steps to be taken for the student.

Teams used a variety of sources of information and indicators of student progress. Frequently reported indicators were the completeness of a student's work and classroom test scores. Records used to determine change included incidences of acting out, or the number of absences, tardies, or fights. Experts' observations of the student, such as from the school nurse or psychologist, were reported as both sources and indicators by many schools. The improvement of a student's performance over his or her previous performance also was an indicator. Other indicators were an improved match between the student's achievement and ability. Almost all schools reported that the reduction or elimination of unwanted behavior, or the appearance of a new, desired behavior suggested the student was making progress.

3. Variations on the third activity, "one or more participants in the meeting follow(s) up the decision(s) made at the meeting."

a. Who Acts on Team Suggestions. Who follows up on the meeting suggestions depends on how the team is organized and who is expected to act on the suggestions. Sometimes that actor is a member of the student study team and sometimes the suggestions have to be passed on to others to act on. Whether there is one person officially responsible for passing on suggestions to persons not at the SST meeting varies from team to team.*

b. Feedback Relevant to Team Processes. How much time a team can devote to discussing its own decision-making process and the resources available to maintaining records of meeting minutes and decisions varied from team to team and school to school.

C. Effects and Effectiveness. This subsection contains two parts. The first part reports the judgments of school staff about the extent of accomplishment of the purposes of the student study team processes at their particular schools. The second part provides the judgments of school staff about the elements which enhance the teams' effectiveness.

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* Parents were often included in discussions involving their children. Parent Contact was also coded for periodic informational reports (either written notes or phone contact). Occasionally parents were involved in specific extensions of school-based modifications, usually in the form of "contracts" for behavior modification.

a. Accomplishment of Student Study Team Purposes. School staff generally rated the purposes they identified as purposes of their student study teams as "well-accomplished" or "moderately-accomplished" (see p. 24).

b. Elements Enhancing the Student Study Team Process. School staff generally reported seven elements as helpful in enhancing team effectiveness:

individual acceptance of responsibility for and completion of tasks outside team meetings;

written reminders to team members of upcoming meetings;

records of team decisions and task assignments;

informal communication between regular and special education staff outside team meetings;

meeting attendance by all staff involved in student's modifications/ interventions;

regular education teachers accepting responsibility for referring student cases to the team; and

the team "sharing" in the success of modifications/ interventions.

SECTION 2. FINDINGS ON STUDENTS

Who was "Noticed"

A variety of students were noticed and the "problem" characteristics about which the "noticers" were concerned varied. No two students were alike.

A. Student Demographics. The project staff analyzed information supplied by the school participants on 194 students. Of these 139 were boys and the remainder girls. All grade levels were represented. The students' ages fell in the usual age range for kindergarten through 12th grade students.

One hundred and one students were enrolled at the beginning of the data collection period in the regular education program only. A few students (10) were reported enrolled only in special education at the beginning of the data collection period. Seventy-eight of the 194 students were concurrently enrolled in two or more programs: regular education plus categorical, school/district, and/or special education programs*.

The students were reported as speaking collectively nine languages. English was the predominant language, both as a first and as a second language. Spanish was the next most frequently reported language in both cases. The other languages included Farsi, French, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese,

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* Also, one student was enrolled exclusively in a categorical program and four students did not have enrollment specified due to special circumstances such as transfers from other schools or districts and reentry from resident detoxification or mental health facilities.

Samoan and Tongan. There were a few cases in which these other languages appeared as first languages but primarily they were reported as second languages with English as the first language*.

B. Student Characteristics. The participants reported over 300 specific descriptors of concerns or "problem" characteristics of their students. These specific descriptors were grouped into the 15 "Problem" Characteristics outlined in Chapter II. To summarize, the 15 categories focused on individual subjects such as reading, math and spelling; overall academics, such as academic performance and academic behavior; overall behavior, such as school behavior and social/emotional adjustment; and health-related characteristics, such as motor coordination and perceptual dysfunction.

Each student's case was a unique combination of the "problem" characteristics. Collectively the student records provided by the school participants reflected a very wide diversity in student "problem" characteristics to which the participating schools' student study teams attempted to respond.

The relative frequency of the student characteristics can be ranked as to the number of student records for which a given characteristic was cited. For the 194 analyzed student records provided by the school participants General

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* The findings on students are limited by the lack of volunteer schools from inner-cities and schools with large student enrollments whose primary language is not English. Still, the diversity of student ages, grade levels, and "problem" characteristics in the group of 194 students provides a firm basis for the recommendations provided in the next chapter.

Academic Performance* was the most frequently occurring student "problem" characteristic. Two other "overall" characteristics (Social/Emotional Adjustment and Academic Behavior) were the next most frequently occurring "problems" in the student records. Reading was the most frequent individual subject "problem" area. These four characteristics occurred either alone or in some combination with the other characteristics in over 40% of the student records.

There has been considerable analysis effort applied to questions of "patterns of characteristics" presented either by student program enrollment or by grade level. Conclusions remain elusive in this area. School participants were specifically instructed to provide records which would reflect the diversity of students they dealt with. Any effort, therefore, to draw the "typical student" the school participants encountered would necessarily be faulty. However, a few trends can be identified. Although almost 60% of the students presented problems in either individual academic subjects or overall academic performance, 30% of the students did not exhibit any purely academic "problems".

Further, although the two "overall" behavior characteristics (School Behavior and Social/Emotional Adjustment) were cited in over half the student records, "overall" behavior was cited as the only "problem" in 14% of the cases. Sixty-eight percent of the students the school participants reported on did not present any of the four health characteristics. On the other hand, for

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* General Academic Performance includes, for example, test results, performance in comparison to grade level, and retention of previously learned material. For additional specific descriptors of "problem" characteristics see pp. 21-22.

nearly one-third of the students a physical or organic "problem" (e.g. motor coordination and perceptual dysfunctions) formed at least part of the constellation of concerns their student study teams had to take into account when recommending modifications or interventions to enhance the student's ability to learn. In other words, the students tended to present complex combinations of academic, learning, behavioral, and organic "problems" to their student study teams.

Short-Term Effects on Students

A. Modifications/ Interventions Suggested. Over 1,000 combinations of specific student "problem" characteristics and specific modifications and interventions were reported attempted by the school participants during the data collection period. As described in Chapter II, the modifications and interventions were grouped into nine categories which included outside resource interventions, changes in classroom environment, teaching techniques and work assignments, and the involvement of parents (see pp. 20, 23).

By nearly two-to-one the most common recommendation made by the participating schools was one involving Outside Resource Intervention. This is a very broad category of intervention which incorporates virtually all persons and/or programs outside the regular classroom and the regular classroom teacher. Most frequently the outside resources cited included observation and/or screening by the principal, psychologist, or reading specialist who may have used specific diagnostic materials either in the actual classroom or elsewhere. Sometimes these outside resources were the persons responsible for providing modifications based on their observational determinations; sometimes they

provided materials or suggestions to the classroom teacher who was responsible for enacting them.

The next most frequent recommendation was for some change in the student's Environment. This very often specifically referred to the use of adult or peer tutors, involvement in small groups or increased one-to-one instruction by the teacher or aide. Environment also included changes to classroom assignment, grade level or schedule of day activities or length of day.

Parent Contact ranked third in frequency of modification/intervention suggestions. The involvement of parents primarily involved daily, weekly, or biweekly contact (phone calls, notes or reports). Occasionally parents were involved in specific extensions of school-based modifications but these were usually in the form of "contracts" for behavior modification.

Whenever focusing on modifications/ interventions introduced to deal with some aspect of the student's "problem" characteristics it is important to keep in mind that "problems" were infrequently singular. "Problems" students experienced were often complex and difficult to identify and respond to. Each student's case was unique even if the student study team recognized similarities with other students' cases it dealt with.

B. Success of Modifications/ Interventions Attempted. "Success" was determined by the participant schools' own reports of the students' progress under the recommended modifications or interventions. As mentioned in Chapter II, the success of "active modifications/ interventions" was rated on a 7-point

scale (from "unable to judge success" to "extremely successful; modification terminated, problem resolved".) In the short-term afforded to the school participants to collect data on their student cases (less than one semester) over 1,000 "active" modifications or interventions were attempted. Of these, over one-third had not sufficient time given to determine their success. On the other hand, the participant schools reported over 40% of the modifications/interventions that the student study team recommended did have some identifiable success (i.e., slight, moderate, good or excellent results) even within the limitations of the data collection period. In fact, less than 2% of the modifications or interventions attempted were reported as clearly unsuccessful.

Outside Resource Intervention was the most frequently successful intervention in the student cases. In these cases Outside Resource Intervention was successful when applied to 12 of the 13 "problem" characteristics. However, the data collection period was too short for determining the results of all assessments for outside resource interventions, such as for possible special education placement. Changes to the student's learning Environment and modifications of Teaching Technique ranked second and third in reportage of successful application to a student's "problem(s)". It must be pointed out that successful intervention or modification within one "problem" characteristic does not necessarily mean that the student ceased to be a case for the school participant's student study team. Nor can it be said that a recommendation successfully applied for one characteristic would necessarily achieve the same result for another "problem" characteristic or have a generalized effect.

In this, reportage of "extreme success"* is instructive. There are slight indications of two types of trends when we focus on short-term, extreme success of modifications or interventions. First, the student presents "problem(s)" which the "noticer" recognizes clearly and for which there is a relatively straight-forward response possible. One of the best examples is the student whose poor performance and behavior problems seemed to be related to poor vision. The student study team had the school nurse give a vision screening and subsequently contacted the parents to recommend the student be evaluated for glasses by an optometrist. Glasses were prescribed, the student's academic performance and behavior problems diminished markedly. Extreme success was achieved in a very short period of time.

Second, the student's "problem" is clearly multifaceted. Low performance in several individual academic subjects may be coupled with a poor attitude to school, problematic interaction with both adults and peers, coordination or perceptual acuity below expected maturity levels, hyperactivity and/or poor physical health.

In these cases where short-term, "extreme success" was achieved it was apparent the team brought to bear as many resources as it could muster to support not only the student's needs, but also the classroom teacher's. The parents were often also involved and/or the impact of the home situation on the student evaluated and compensated for if possible (e.g., arrangements for school-provided meals, contacts with community services such as child protec-

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* Modifications/ interventions rated 2.5 and 2.6.

tive services or family or drug counseling). Outside learning specialists provided additional in-class materials or teaching modules or strategic advice. In some cases the student study teams also recommended referral for assessment for possible special education placement and services. Whatever the specific combination of interventions or modifications, the team's efforts were multidimensional and essentially simultaneous. In all that was attempted, something "worked" and the "working" generalized to other "problem" areas such that across-the-board success was witnessed.

It is beyond the scope of this study to determine if either of these trends were byproducts of the study's request for (self-selected) diversity in student records sent for analysis. Nor is it possible to say whether given additional time more of the "too soon to tell" cases would result in success with their modifications or interventions. Indeed, these short-term success cases could backslide as time passes. Alternatively, these trends may point to types of student cases in which a student study team can respond effectively by applying all available expertise quickly in a modification/ intervention environment supportive of the student, the student's teacher(s), and possibly the student's parents, and thus help the student to achieve almost immediate success.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This section presents the conclusions of the Department's cooperative, descriptive study on existing student study team processes. The conclusions have been drawn from the findings above and the review and interpretations of those findings by the school and Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) representatives to the study, by the members of the Project Advisory Committee, and by field readers who did not participate in the intensive data collection phase of the study.

1. The study accomplished its purpose which was to describe existing student study team processes and not to interfere in those processes in the participating schools.

2. No single definition of the student study team processes was found. The student study team processes at each of the participating schools were different in purposes, in membership, and in team operation. School staff had tailored their processes to fit their schools, the resources available at their schools, and the need of their staff and students.

3. Although the details of the processes were different in each school, three universal operations were found to have been present at all schools:

> 1. Someone notices a student and has a concern; wants help or advice or thinks the student needs help or advice; and brings the student's case to the attention of the student study team process in the school.
>
> 2. A group of two or more persons meet to discuss the student's case and to make decision(s).
>
> 3. One or more participants in the meeting follow(s) up the decision(s) made in the meeting.

The process was cyclical, not a "one-shot and we're done with this case" process.

4. The persons who met to discuss a student's case typically were regular education teachers, special educations teachers, and specialists from the district or SELPA. Parents were often invited to participate in discussions involving their children.

5. School staff judged the team processes at their schools as effective in accomplishing their purposes, yet saw room for improvement, particularly in ways and means for following up the effects of the modifications/ interventions undertaken for their students. School staff generally were not satisfied with the philosophy of "No news is good news".

6. Leadership, responsibility, cooperation, and communication factors were judged as enhancing the effectiveness of student study team processes at the participating school sites. Seven specific factors were most frequently cited:

individual acceptance of responsibility for and completion of tasks outside team meetings;

written reminders to team members of upcoming meetings;

records of team decisions and task assignments;

informal communication between regular and special education staff outside team meetings;

meeting attendance by all staff involved in student's modifications/ interventions;

regular education teachers accepting responsibility for referring student cases to the team; and

the team "sharing" in the success of modifications/ interventions.

It is evident that a collegial working relationship among school staff at a school site and the sharing of responsibilities and successes are the underlying themes of these elements.

7. Among the areas for improvement cited by the school participants in project workshops were clarification of the purposes of the student study team processes; the relationship between regular and special education programs, staff, and funding; and the distinctions between student study team processes and the Individualized Educational Program (IEP) team processes.

8. No two of the 194 students selected for intensive data collection during Fall Semester 1985-86 were alike. The study did not discover "recipes" for a "cookbook" on which modifications/ interventions were most successful with which "problem" characteristics. There were no patterns of "problem" characteristics and modifications/ interventions recommended to address "problem" characteristics. No subsequent patterns of relative effectiveness of modifications/ interventions in enhancing the students' success in the regular education program were found.

9. As a whole the students covered the expected age range for students in kindergarten through grade twelve. All grade levels were represented. One hundred thirty-nine students were boys; the remainder girls. Eight languages were spoken in addition to English although English was the dominant primary language. Most of the students (101) began the data collection period enrolled in the regular education program. However, over 40% (78) were enrolled concurrently in one or more categorical and school/district programs and thus were receiving additional assistance (e.g., remedial reading,

English-as-a-Second-Language, Chapter 2) in addition to the regular education program prior to the beginning of this study.

10. Most of the students were determined by their student study teams to be presenting more than one of the 15 categories of "problem" characteristics. The most frequently cited "problem" characteristics were: General Academic Performance, Social/ Emotional Adjustment, Academic Behavior, and Reading. These four characteristics occurred either alone or in some combination with the other eleven characteristics in over 40% of the student records.

11. More than 1,000 combinations of "problem" characteristics and suggested modifications/ interventions were reported by the school participants. There were no patterns of modifications or interventions recommended for the students.

The most frequently recommended modification/ intervention was referral for intervention by a person outside the regular (or special) classroom. For example, persons with specialized knowledge and experience, such as resource specialists, speech teachers, and school psychologists, were frequently requested to observe the student and make suggestions. Persons located off the school campus or in the community were also cited by the school participants as resources for the team and the student.

School staff, particularly teachers, were responsible for carrying out a great many of the suggested modifications/ interventions which had to be enacted within the student's classroom.

Parents participated in implementing some modifications/ interventions for their children. For example, parents promised their student study teams to carry out at home behavior modification techniques begun in the classroom. Parents also took their children to community-based persons or agencies for counseling or medical care.

12. Over 40% of the modifications/ interventions undertaken for the students were judged as having some degree of success with the students' "problem" characteristics. Due to the relatively short time period for data collection, particularly for students brought to their team's attention later in the semester, there was little time for implementing modifications/ interventions, and even less time to observe and record the results of the implementation. Similarly, there was a short time period for completing referral processes to outside specialists and community agencies where such a recommendation was made. About one-third of the modifications/ interventions attempted were therefore recorded as being "in progress" or "too soon to tell". Very few modifications/ interventions were discontinued due to lack of apparent success during the data collection period. In these cases new modifications/ interventions were implemented.

CHAPTER IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Included in this chapter are recommendations on student study team processes to policy-makers; personnel trainers; school, district and Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) staff; parents; and students. These recommendations are based on two sources. The first source is findings of the Department's study, including the experiences and expertise of over 100 study participants and project advisory committee members. The second is findings of local evaluation studies on student study team processes conducted by Special Education Local Plan Areas in California over the past several years.

As one of the first evaluation studies funded under the State Education Agency/Federal Evaluation Studies Program, the recommendations will also address the impact and effectiveness of programs authorized and supported by the Education of the Handicapped Act as amended by Public law 94-142 (the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975) and Public Law 98-199. These programs include training, research, and aid to states.

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL POLICY-MAKERS SHOULD:

* think of student study team processes as complementing both regular education and categorical education programs, not as a substitute for either.

* recognize that student study team processes are not a way of saving money on special education programs.

The recommendations made by the teams typically require staff time to act on the modifications and interventions on behalf of the students. These providers may be persons at the school, at the district or Special Education Local Plan Area level, or in the community.

* recognize that student study team processes are school site-operated resources for ideas on resolving the "problem" characteristics of individual students. Student study teams are also a clearinghouse for information about services which individual students may need to succeed in school.

* permit local schools to decide for themselves about establishing and operating student study team processes at their schools, rather than mandating a process. The active participation of persons from the whole school is fundamental to the success of the student study team process and the goal of helping students.

Flexibility at the school level is the necessary condition for the continuation of creativity in existing student study team processes.

School staff, including teachers, should have a voice in determining what form, if any, a formal student study team process would take in their school. Although formalizing the student study team process may be helpful to school staff, such formalizing always increases requirements for clerical support and record keeping. It may be that current informal processes are working well for the benefit of students and teachers alike.

* limit their role in the student study team process to encouragement and support. Mandation would undermine the essential collegial problem-solving process of people at a school.

Mandation, with its almost inevitable state (or federal) guidelines and regulations, and ultimately, periodic checks on compliance, may well stifle creativity and staff interest in improving school processes. Practices can be mandated. Enthusiasm and a spirit of cooperation on behalf of students, teachers, and parents can not be mandated.

* clarify the distinctions between student study team processes and the individualized educational program (IEP) team process.

* revise compliance and auditing practices, consistent with law, to encourage rather than discourage the voluntary operation of student study team processes by schools.

* clarify the relationships between regular education and categorical education programs, staff, and funding, in the student study team processes.

The primary intent of student study team processes is to enable students to succeed in the regular education program. In view of the almost universal involvement of special education instructional and support staff in student study team processes, clarification is

needed. A collaborative effort should result in a greater understanding of the two processes by parents, new school staff, school staff with new responsibilities, and policy-makers such as members of local boards of education.

* study the relationships between guidance and counseling services and student study team processes, particularly in view of recent changes in graduation requirements.

This relationship is particularly important in intermediate and secondary level schools. Students in intermediate and secondary schools need high-quality counseling and guidance, particularly academic counseling, so that they do not close out their options prematurely. One opportunity for accomplishing this in California is in workshops held by and with district counseling directors on the recently developed state plan for comprehensive counseling and guidance, to include academic, career, personal, and social counseling for all students.

TRAINERS IN INSERVICE STUDENT STUDY TEAM PROCESS TRAINING PROGRAMS SHOULD:

* heed school staff reports that their greatest needs were for assistance in following up on their recommendations for interventions/ modifications and in assessing the effects of their efforts for their student (positive changes in "problem" characteristics).

* conduct and/or take advantage of field research on how school staff, parents, and students determine the effects of modifications/ interventions suggested by school student study teams.

Given school staffs' expressed needs, this type of research should be given a high priority.

* base training programs on the results of such field research.

* adapt training for school staff to the staff and students at each school.

* demonstrate the positive effects of their training programs on students in elementary, intermediate, and high schools before offering a training program to school staff.

The procedures developed for use in this study for ascertaining the effects on students are only one set of such procedures. Individual training programs may wish to develop their own.

SCHOOL, DISTRICT & SPECIAL EDUCATION LOCAL PLAN AREA STAFF SHOULD:

* tailor their student study team processes to fit school staff and students. Intermediate and high schools should take into account their departmental structure and organization. When a key member of any school-based process leaves a school or takes on new responsibilities, a new configuration of staff collaboration has to be developed.

* make inservice training on student study team processes useful to teachers, particularly regular education teachers. The training should be conducted by persons experienced in regular education curriculum, teaching methods and material, and graduation reqirements. The training should include a section on the relative roles and responsibilities of regular education and special education staff for student study team processes.

Schools should provide opportunities for staff to exchange information about the operations and effects of student study team processes with others engaged in similar efforts at similar grade levels. The sharing made possible by the workshops held in the Department's study was designated as a helpful component by study participants, particularly for study participants in high schools.

* analyze the characteristics of students brought to the attention of their teams. If a pattern of needs is evident, then the school can take steps to tailor its programs to meet those needs. When students' needs change or when new needs become apparent, the composition and preparation of team members should be examined for their extent of fit to the new situation. An example is the introduction of new graduation requirements.

Schools should examine the use (or non-use) of the student study team process by teachers at particular grade levels, or, in intermediate and high schools, by departments. Patterns of use may highlight the needs of students and also the capabilities of service providers to whom students are frequently referred.

* measure the effect of modifications/ interventions in resolving the "problem" characteristics of the students brought to the attention of the student study team process. Schools should examine the progress of students who have not benefitted from modifications and interventions undertaken on their behalf. With effectiveness information on hand, schools can explain and refine their processes.

* invite parents to participate in student study team discussions when the person who brought their child to the attention of the team process thinks the student needs help or advice. The student study team process is an opportunity for school-home communication. School staff experienced in the student study team process have

found parent participation beneficial. Parents have appreciated the care and concern shown by staff and have more confidence in their schools.

Invitations to parents should most likely be extended when the person who brought the student's case to the attention of the team process thinks the student needs help or advice, rather than when the person wants help or advice for himself or herself.

* inform their parent organizations and student councils about the purposes, operation, and effects of their student study team processes.

PARENTS SHOULD:

* accept a school's invitation to participate in a student study team meeting to discuss their child.

* be prepared to discuss the modifications/ interventions which have worked (or not worked) in the past for their child and provide ideas on what motivates their child to succeed.

STUDENTS SHOULD:

* consider any avenue for seeking and receiving help early on as a mark of maturity and self-determination.

* bring themselves to the attention of the student study team process at their schools. If the reputation of the persons involved in the process is that they are helpful, positive, knowledgeable, realistic, and trustworthy, the student study team process can be a direct resource for students who are concerned about enhancing their own educational success.

ALL SCHOOLS, NOT JUST THOSE SCHOOLS WITH STUDENT STUDY TEAM PROCESSES, SHOULD:

* examine the effects of their assistance to teachers, parents, and students themselves in enhancing the success of all students.

* use the results of their examination to keep their school programs tailored to their current needs and enhance the academic, career, personal, and social growth of all their students.

"What we treasure, we measure."

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* Working papers are available through ERIC.